

Providence Public Library

Account of building and work.

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PROVIDENCE PUBLIC LIBRARY



ACCOUNT OF ITS BUILDING
AND ITS WORK

PROVIDENCE
1910

The Providence Public Library.

An account of its building and its work.

The attractive and convenient building of the Providence Public Library, which was erected during the years 1896-1900, and which was first occupied in March, 1900, stands in an easily accessible portion of Providence, facing on Washington Street, about a quarter of a mile Southwest of the City Hall.

The month of February in this year, (1910), marks the thirty-second year of the original opening of the library to the public, in other quarters, and the month following that, (March, 1910), will mark the tenth anniversary of its opening to the public in the present building. It is therefore an appropriate time at which to review the circumstances of its origin, the development of its work, and the conditions under which it is at present housed.¹

LOCATION AND ARCHITECTURAL TREATMENT.

The lot on which the building stands is nearly square, the longest side being 201 feet in length.

It is most favorably situated, having streets on three sides,—Washington, Greene, and Fountain Streets. The fourth side, which joins two other estates, very fortunately is towards the downward slope of the hill, so that the second-story windows of the library building easily look over the tops of the nearest buildings in that direction. From every point of view, the location is a favorable one, not only as regards light, air, freedom from dust, protection from fire, and excellent drainage, but also as regards accessibility.

At the end of this account of the library will be found detailed directions in regard to the lines of street-cars which pass the building.

The façade of the Providence Public Library building, the architects of which were Stone, Carpenter, and Willson, suggests that of the Boston Public Library only because both the Boston building and the Providence building trace their architectural pedigree, in a way, to the Library of Sainte Geneviève in Paris, and,—still further back,—to the Italian palaces of the Renaissance period. However, after the visitor has turned the corner of

Greene Street, and has observed the aspect of the building from Greene Street or Fountain Street, he is not likely to retain this first impression, of a resemblance to the Boston Public Library, so widely different are its ground plan and interior arrangement. In other words, on a lot of land nearly square, the longest side of which measures 201 feet, stands this T-shaped building, which measures about 180 feet from front to rear, (not including the stone terrace at Washington Street which would bring it up to 190). The front member of the T measures 132 feet along Washington Street. The main building, (or Washington Street member of the T), is 55 feet wide; and the Stack Building, or other member, is 31 feet wide at its narrowest point. The "hammer-head" end of the Stack, at Fountain Street, is about 36 feet wide. At the two ends of the main building, it rises about 42 feet, from the ground to the eaves.

Even before breaking ground, in 1896, the lines on which the future extension of the building should be made were definitely marked out. In 1909, a committee of the Board of Trustees was appointed, to report on the details of constructing an extension of the building, along Greene Street.

GENERAL PLAN OF BUILDING.

As seen from the Washington Street side, the building shows two stories only, and in its decided emphasis of length, rather than height, very well exemplifies the dictum of the English architect who wrote: "If you have height, emphasize that; if you have length, emphasize that." On the other hand, when seen from the Fountain Street gate, the building is plainly one of three stories, the lower one (or "Basement"), being of Westerly granite. Lastly, the skylight along the roof of the main building, (which is not very plainly in evidence, to the passer-by), renders possible a series of very useful Third-Story rooms, all of which are lighted from above. There is thus a very much greater amount of space in the building, than would be inferred from the first view of it from Washington Street. On turning through Greene and Fountain Streets, one sees to best advantage the massive balustraded stone wall, which carries the architectural treatment of the main entrance and its approaches, around the side and rear of the li-

¹ The following description is reproduced, with extensive changes, from the "Quarterly Bulletin" of this Library, July, 1906, v. 4, p. 40-52.

brary grounds. As one passes along the Fountain Street sidewalk, going towards Aborn Street, one might easily fail to notice that there is any Boiler House within the grounds, since the roof of that structure rises no higher than the top of the brick wall, and is built of the same brick and stone as the wall in question and the library building itself. And yet, no space has been in any way sacrificed, as one may easily see by stepping inside the Boiler House, which is, for the most part sunk below the level of the ground, the coal bins extending beneath the sidewalk. From this Boiler House, the tall chimney, or "smoke-stack," rises, in a graceful shaft, to the height of about 80 feet. So far from being in any way an objectionable feature, architecturally, this tall, symmetrical shaft (not to be mistaken for one further up the hill), has proved to be an object on which the eye always rests with pleasure. More than this, owing to the enlightenment and good judgment of the fireman, no one has ever seen clouds of black smoke coming out of the top of the chimney, even in the "soft coal" days of seven years ago. While the good judgment thus shown has fortunately avoided causing annoyance to our neighbors, it has also proved strictly economical, as regards expenditure for coal.

One admirable feature of the building is the fact that it has no "rear treatment," properly so-called; and those living near the library on Fountain Street have emphatically expressed their delight in the aspect of the building from that side. As an illustration of the attention to details which characterizes the building, there may be mentioned the frieze, which runs entirely around the main building. An excellent place from which to see the carving on this frieze to the best advantage is through the windows of the Educational Study Room, looking towards the main building. It will be noticed that among the heads of the cherubs which appear in the capitals of the pilasters again and again, there are no two which are precisely alike.

The Stack building is almost equally successful, in another way. The editor of one of the architectural journals, writing of this structure, with its ingenious division of stories, and skilful fenestration, stated that he was particularly struck with the signal success with

which the architect of the building, while piercing the wall with hundreds of windows, has yet avoided the "factory-like" effect which has usually accompanied such a measure. Here, however, was a most successful solution of what had hitherto been regarded as "an almost insoluble problem." And the most gratifying feature of this attempt is, that it has been carried through without sacrifice of the interior lighting of any of the floors of this six-story stack, as the most rigorous examination of its books will show.

THE LANDSCAPE GARDENING SCHEME.

The landscape gardening scheme adopted for the library grounds includes the yard through which one enters the building and the Boiler House in the rear, and also the larger space at the corner of Greene and Fountain Streets, as well as the narrower spaces between the front of the building and the stone balustrade. In all three of these spaces have been set not only some of the rarest of shrubs, but also some of those which are at once perennially familiar and perennially esteemed. Along the line of Greene Street is a succession of lilacs, (mostly foreign varieties), so placed as to bloom in succession through a series of weeks instead of simultaneously. Other shrubs and bushes included are cornels, viburnums, weigelas, spiræas, barberries, mahonias, etc. Earliest of all, the always welcome forsythia,—well named "sunshine bush,"—is also placed at several appropriate points. One of these catches the eye of every visitor to the building, ascending the steps on Washington Street, from the direction of Aborn Street, and, if the sun should be low in the West, it very effectually turns the rays of the sun into a deeper gold.

THE BUILDING MATERIALS.

The building is mainly of light brick, with Indiana limestone trimmings and granite base. Seldom is an architectural material more felicitously yoked with an architectural style than in the present instance, where this dull gray, Roman brick, so appropriately embodies some of the requirements of the Italian Renaissance. It is not always remembered that brick was one of the materials most successfully employed in the period of the great Italian builders. The ten years which have elapsed since the building was first occupied

have only served to emphasize the wisdom of this choice. The "weathering" has only helped to give the coloring of the brick and stone a softer tint, and to give the building as a whole an air of belonging to the ground where it stands.

LIBRARY "DEPARTMENTS."

The Providence Public Library has sometimes been described as a "departmental" library, and this is true, to a certain extent. One does not indeed find here a library of the type of the Newberry Library in Chicago, which carries the departmental principle to its logical extreme, so that one finds a department devoted to History, for instance, another to Natural Science, and, so on, throughout the series. This building does, however, present an interesting modification of that scheme; and, out of its total of more than 167,000 volumes (about 22,000 of which are "deposited collections," rather than the property of this library), not far from 50,000 are in the various rooms of the Main Building, as distinguished from the Stack. So far as the departments are concerned, there are several which the reader finds occasion to consult. These are the Issue Department, the Reference Department, and the Periodical Department, on the First Floor; the Children's Department and the Foreign Department, on the Second Floor; and the Special Libraries Department, on the Third Floor, (the last-named comprising art, music, and industrial books).

A DETAILED ACCOUNT OF THE SEPARATE ROOMS.

In the building as a whole, (exclusive of the Stack), there are 35 rooms, distributed through the three floors just named above, and the Basement. It will be well to make a detailed survey of them, beginning with the Delivery Room, on the First Floor.

Delivery Room.

In the architectural plan of any library building belonging to this general type, the three factors which control the situation are (1) the position of the main staircase, (2) the position of the main reading room, and (3) the position of the room containing the Delivery Counter, (or the point of contact between the reader applying for a book, and the great mass of the books in the Stack). If, for in-

stance, the main reading room occupies the whole of the unbroken front of the second story, it is obviously impossible to carry up the main staircase, against this front wall. If not carried up against this wall, the choice for location of the Delivery Room has usually seemed to lie between a space under a central dome, as in the Library of Congress, or else a room placed at one side of the upper end of the staircase, as in the Boston Public Library. In the Providence Public Library, neither one of these two schemes was adopted, but the Delivery Room was thrust into the Stack Building, much as a tenon is thrust into a mortise. The result is that, (after allowing for a temporary use of a part of the stack for other purposes), when one is at the Delivery Counter, and thus in direct contact with the stack, one has "stack" below him and above him, as well as beyond him. This condition represents an attempt to profit by the experience of the Cornell University Library, whose building is constructed with the stack running down the side of a hill; and where, entering from the outside, on a level with the Delivery Room, one finds that this level is half way between the lowest and highest points in the Stack Building. Moreover, since the Cornell instance was cited, in the first draught of the present account of the building printed in 1906, the same principle has been embodied in the plans for the new John Hay Library at Brown University, now well advanced towards completion. One has to admit the impossibility of placing the Delivery Counter of a library at the absolute centre of a sphere; yet all three of the instances just cited represent an attempt to arrive as near this ideal as possible.

Still another point is of interest in this connection. The stack stories which have the greatest capacity are purposely placed as near the Delivery Counter as possible. Thus it results that, without going higher up than the third story from the bottom, (namely, in (1) the "Basement Stack," under the Delivery Room, (2) Stack No. 1, next down from the Delivery Counter, and (3) Stack No. 2, next up from the Delivery Counter,) it is possible to store 100,000 volumes. The Basement Stack communicates with the Delivery Counter by means of a lift which comes up in the under side of one of the desks, while Stack No. 1

and Stack No. 2 communicate directly with the Delivery Room, each by a window through which books are handed, (instead of being carried around by the staircase and door. In fact, this device, of "breaking joints," at the line of contact of the Stack Building and Main Building, instead of making either of the two stack floors continuous with the floor of the Delivery Room, has the effect of multiplying by two the number of books most directly tributary to the Delivery attendant. The stories of the Stack above these two, (namely, the 3d, 4th, 5th, and 6th), are served by electric lifts connecting them with the Delivery Counter. The Delivery Room is the largest one in the building, (76 x 48 feet); and while it has a unity of treatment which binds together its different parts, its significance, architecturally, is due to the fact that it is partly in the Main Building and partly in the Stack Building. From the outside, these architectural characteristics are evident, in the clear-story effect, so obvious in the view of the Stack Building as seen from Greene Street. From the inside, the architectural features chiefly in evidence are the "neck" joining the two buildings, which is utilized by piers of massive construction; and the clear-story arrangement already referred to, which shows a quite uncommon variety of window provision. The light, in fact, for that portion of the Delivery Room nearest to the Stack, is admitted in three different ways;—(1) by the small square windows such as those above the card-catalogue; (2) by the skylights filling the square spaces of the roof outside the row of piers; (3) by the large semi-circular windows rising from above the level of the roof just mentioned.

The Delivery Room is, architecturally, the most important in the building, as well as the largest, with a height of more than 20 feet, (in the main portion), and with a dignified and effective scheme of decoration. While this room is thus emphasized, it is plainly apparent to every visitor not only that the Entrance Hall is not architecturally emphasized, but that there is no reason why it should be. In other words, this Entrance Hall, (that part of it on the Ground Floor), is not much more than another vestibule, across which one rapidly steps and at once reaches the Delivery Room; nor is it a place from which one starts over again, to

go to the other portions of the ground floor, as, for example, in the lobby of a hotel. All this, however, is true of the Delivery Room, for it is here that one takes his bearings, and turns, either to go to the Periodical Room or to the Reference Room and Map Room, or to the Delivery Counter, or to the Card Catalogue or other catalogues. And it is precisely for this reason that the end of the Delivery Room nearest the entrance is utilized as it is, for the Information Desk and Registration Desk. It is intended that each person who passes beyond the threshold shall at least have the opportunity to avail himself of the benefit and assistance to be gained from the Information Desk, as well as the Registration Desk; and the words painted on the fronts of these two desks, respectively, will serve to arrest the attention of those who are passing. From this point on, his course is clear. A straight line drawn at right angles to the middle point of the granite terrace of the Washington Street entrance, passes between the two members of the "fly-doors" at the entrance, through the centre of the Delivery Room, through the centre of the space between the two principal open-book-cases; through the aisle between the rows of seats for readers; through the centre of the Delivery Counter; through the centre of the window connecting the Delivery Room with the Stack, and through the centre of the middle aisle of the Stack, to the centre of the Fountain Street wall of the Stack Building. This is, in fact, the axis of the building, and it is on this straight line of "most direct access," that the reader approaches the Delivery Counter, on the one hand, and that the books are brought from the Stack to the Delivery Counter, on the other hand. The reader, moreover, on his way to the Delivery Counter, necessarily passes by the open-book-case containing the new books, which are placed there from week to week, as they are purchased. It thus commonly happens that one selects a new book, while returning the old one. For purposes of selection also, there are always other groups of books to be found on the other open-book-cases in the Delivery Room, whether of good stories, good essays, interesting books of travel, or other lines of reading. As already indicated, the Stack is in the most direct con-

tact with the Delivery Room, and those students who are provided with a Stack-permit may pass directly through the door near the Delivery Counter. In all other cases, the various catalogues in the Delivery Room serve the purpose of the reader. They include the card-catalogue, which is to be found along the wall, at the left of the Delivery Counter; and also the classified lists along the wall on the opposite side of the room. Besides these, there are to be found at the tables and desks, in this room, bulletins, catalogues, etc. Within the last five years, the book-cases in the Delivery Room have been used more and more, for placing where they will be accessible to the readers, such books, brought from the Stack, as are of special interest to the readers. So successfully has this plan worked, that more shelf-space for this purpose is urgently needed.

The Issue Department.

As has been indicated above, the main charging-desk, (where all of the books are returned, and where all those circulated from the First Floor are issued), is at the further end of the Delivery Room, in as close contact with the Stack as possible. As has been stated above, from the two lowest Stack stories, books are handed through a window to this desk, to be issued, while electric lifts bring the books from the four Stack stories higher up. Yet this is not the only place in the building where a book may be charged, for home use. No matter on what floor of the main building a reader may find a book which he wishes to take home, he can have it charged on that floor. Books are accordingly issued, for home use, in the Art Library, on the Third Floor; and in the Children's Library and in the Foreign Department, on the Second Floor.

Within the last few years, the circulation has shown a marked tendency to increase. In 1905, it was 129,707; in 1906, 130,702; in 1907, 145,431; in 1908, 190,714; in 1909, 199,950. The gain, in circulation, in 1908, over 1907, was 45,283; and, over 1899, 85,484. Not all of this gain is due to the establishment of the Branch and Delivery. For instance, in 1908, the gain, even when confined to the Central Library, was 37,960. It is partly to be accounted for by the policy of duplicating more adequately the books which are in constant demand, begun in 1907.

The Reference Department.

This phase of the library's work has from the first been strongly emphasized. Even in the architecture of the building, this aim is apparent, in the large provision of space not merely for housing the books, but for supplying the reader with an opportunity to read and study the books. Within the building, there are 14 different reading and study rooms, of various sizes and fittings. The building is, in effect, one great laboratory, with the equipment needed for making the most intelligent use of the books.

While reference work, however, is planned for, on as large a scale as possible, all over the building, there is an attempt to focus it, so to speak, on the First Floor, at the Information Desk, which is just at the left, as the reader enters the Delivery Room.

So far as the equipment of "reference books" is concerned, the Information Desk is well located, as being the "headquarters" of the Reference Department. A total of 5,422 volumes of reference books will be found to be accessible in the several departments which "corner" on each other at this point, namely, 827 at the Information Desk, 3,132 in the Reference Room, 1,102 in the Map Room, and 361 in the Cataloguing Room. So greatly has the library's equipment in this field increased during the past few years, that more space is greatly needed, at this very point; and this consideration indeed underlies one of the most pressing of the reasons for the extension of the building. Under the present conditions, more and more of these reference books have had to be shelved at a considerable distance from the place where they are to be used. At the present time, there are more than 1,300 volumes which are thus inconveniently placed. This total of course does not include the large number of reference books which are deliberately placed elsewhere than in or near the Reference Room, as belonging specifically with the various special departments, such as the Foreign Department, the Art Library, etc. All in all, there are more than 9,000 volumes in the building, which are accurately classed as reference books, (dictionaries, cyclopædias, manuals, handbooks, etc.) More than thirty languages are represented, in the dictionaries of language, (i. e., dictionaries by which one

can find the meaning of a foreign word), to be found on these shelves,—namely, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, German, Dutch, Swedish, Dano-Norwegian, Icelandic, Russian, Polish, Hungarian, Modern Greek, Turkish, Arabic, Persian, Armenian, Tamil, Urdú and Hindí, Japanese, Jewish, and Yiddish; also French-Canadian.

To these should be added Greek, Latin, Biblical Hebrew, Anglo-Saxon, and Esperanto.

Strict quiet is observed in the Reference Room, and the fact that such a room can be had by readers, for quiet study and research, has been highly appreciated, from the beginning. No less has the privilege been appreciated, of being able to converse in an ordinary tone of voice, at the Information Desk; and in so large a room as the Delivery Room, this can disturb no one. At the various desks in the Reference Room, each reader can have as large a space to himself as he needs, (with separate light, in the evening), and have books brought to him from any part of the building. Should he have occasion to go out for luncheon, he can leave all the books at his desk until he returns.

Around the wall are placed printed guides to the kinds of books here included, roughly classifying them for the benefit of the readers, (as "Literature," "History," "Biography," etc.). Some of these general divisions, however are sub-divided, as "Literature." Thus, there is a separate group, under the head of "Dictionaries of quotations," including several which are in languages other than English.

A very large share of the reference work, instead of being a momentary response to an application, would properly be described as research work. In such cases as these, the question is noted down, to be looked into, with as much fullness as possible, at the first opportunity. In repeated instances, (since a question of this kind asked by one reader, is likely to be asked by other readers), the references are carefully written out, and published in the daily newspapers, and later, perhaps, on a still more detailed scale, in the library bulletin. In the course of time, very naturally, the memoranda which have been made in connection with reference work, and which have been placed on file, at this desk, have added very much to the library's resources for reference.

An extension telephone was placed at the Information Desk three years ago, (the main telephone being in the Auditor's Room), and this has greatly facilitated the use of this department for studious purposes. It is plain, however, that this is a kind of library use which "grows by what it feeds on;" and the demand for assistance of this kind has more than kept pace with the facilities supplied.

In the Map Room are placed not only the atlases and the guide-books, but also the separate maps, (both mounted and unmounted). Here are also to be found "folders," announcements, etc., issued by the various ocean steamship lines, or issued by railroads in regard to summer resorts. The space in this room also has been exhausted; and it will be necessary to plan for extending its capacity, in some way.

The Cataloguing Room.

The Cataloguing Room, (at present only a portion of the Delivery Room, screened from the rest of the room by partitions less than one-half the height of the room), is intentionally placed so as to be in the closest contact with the public card-catalogue, and also with the thousands of reference books in the Reference Room and at the Information Desk. A lift also connects it directly with the Ordering Department, on the next floor above. More space is urgently needed.

The public card-catalogue is planned to adjoin not merely the Cataloguing Room, but the Delivery Counter, with opportunity close at hand, for consulting the drawers at tables or desks. There are at present 448 drawers, or trays, and they contain about 280,000 cards.

Periodical Room.

As just stated, the Periodical Room is to be found on the First Floor. It occupies the large room at the right, on entering the Delivery Room, corresponding in size, shape, location, and lighting from windows, with the Reference Room, which is at the reader's left, on entering. The total number of periodicals, serials, and annuals regularly received at the library is more than 700, of which about 500 are to be found in the Periodical Room. Most of the annuals, very naturally, are to be found in the Reference Department. By an ingeniously planned case in the centre of the room, containing most of the periodicals, alphabeti-

cally arranged, readers have direct access to what they wish to find. The remainder of the periodicals are filed in drawers, along one side of the room. On one of the columns is posted, each forenoon, the "daily bulletin," containing the "fresh arrivals" of any given day. The fertile mind of one of the custodians, moreover, has devised a considerable number of other extremely helpful bulletins, lists, and catalogues,—all of them contributing to the greater convenience of the reader or student. On the walls surrounding this room, will be found about 1,900 bound volumes of periodicals, comprising those which are in most constant demand. In the building as a whole, there are more than 16,000 bound volumes of periodicals. It is needless to say that intercommunication, between this department and the Reference Department, which is, fortunately, within easy reach, is of constant occurrence.

The total number of periodicals, serials, and annuals has increased about 45 per cent., over the corresponding number in 1900, when the building was first occupied. Not only on this account, but on account of the greatly increased needs of the readers and students using this department, more space is greatly needed.

The Registration Desk.

In making the circuit of the First Floor, the visitor comes, in course, around to the Registration Desk, which, like the Information Desk, is placed close to the entrance, where the reader will be sure of seeing it on entering. At this desk, (which is just at the right on entering), the applications of readers for cards are received and filed, and the cards are issued or reissued. Convenient little "handbooks," explaining how to apply for a card, have been printed in several languages other than English, (including Italian, Portuguese, Russian, Yiddish, and Armenian), and distributed to readers.

THE SECOND FLOOR.

To go from the First Floor to the Second Floor is to enter at once the field of "special" library departments. The entire Second Story is divided naturally, by the intersection of its corridors, into four different groups. These are the Lecture Room, used for exhibits and for the foreign books, as well as for lectures

to the school children and others, (front corner to the right); the Standard Library, with its adjacent reading-room, (rear corner to the right); the group of four connecting executive offices, rear corner to the left); and the Children's Department, (front corner to the left). Besides these there should be mentioned the "Barnard Club Library," (or Educational Department), on this same level, at the end of the staircase corridor. It is for this reason that the architect has found it natural and appropriate to emphasize this Upper Hall, architecturally, as was not the case with the Lower Hall.

The suite of offices.

A more convenient suite of rooms used for administrative purposes could hardly have been provided, than the four which connect with each other on this floor. They include the Librarian's Office, the Auditor's Room, the Record Room, and the Trustees' Room. The entrance to the Librarian's Office, for visitors, is through the adjoining room which is occupied by the Auditor. As the Auditor also acts as Secretary to the Librarian, these two rooms are, in effect, one office. In the Record Room are filed away, on steel shelving, the various receipts, and other financial documents, as well as the records and other papers which comprise the "archives" of the library. The Trustees' Room is not only used once a quarter, for meetings of the full board, but is regularly occupied once a week, for meetings of the Library Committee, (for purchasing books), and also for meetings of other committees, with less regularity. Here are also held the monthly Staff Meetings, while the room is constantly available as an additional "consulting room." The organization of the work in the Auditor's department has proved to be a most convenient and serviceable plan. Not only the books but all other supplies and articles are ordered through this office; and the amounts to be charged are entered for permanent reference.

The Children's Department.

The Children's Department comprises two inter-connecting rooms, known as the Children's Reading Room and the Class Room. The books are arranged around the four walls of the former, on low book-cases, only 5 feet from the floor, so as to be within the children's

reach. There are only about 8,000 volumes in all, and yet there were issued from this room in 1908 more than 53,000 volumes. Two of the four sides of the room contain children's stories, and these are arranged alphabetically on the shelves, by authors, thus enabling the children to go directly to whatever book is desired. The other two sides contain the other books, arranged by classes, such as history, art, nature, etc. In one corner is placed the card-catalogue, which is constantly in use. Some of the departments are kept pretty thoroughly drained, as for instance, the fairy stories. Of these there are about 350 volumes, yet it is rare to find more than half a dozen of them in at one time. From the very great pressure of use in the Children's Department, together with the inability of the library to respond to the demand in any adequate manner, resulted the organization, in 1905, of "The Children's Library Helpers." So far as known, no similar organization has been formed elsewhere, and its development here in Providence is an interesting and delightful testimony to the hold which the Children's Department has always had upon the affections of the community.

As the name "Class Room" implies, the relations of the library with the schools have been intimate, constant, and effective. Even before the Children's Department existed as a distinct department, and while the library was still doing its work under great disadvantages in temporary quarters, the attempt was made to coöperate with the schools as fully as possible. With the occupation of the present building, however, all the measures which were previously in use were extended, and still others were added. Briefly stated, some of the features of the system of coöperation are as follows. Each year, in accordance with dates assigned by the Superintendent of Public Schools, the two upper classes of each of the sixteen grammar schools pay a visit to the library, in company with one of their teachers. They are received in the Lecture Room by the Children's Librarian, who gives them a familiar talk of about 40 minutes, explaining, (in the case of one of the classes), the processes connected with the making of a book,—the printing, proof-reading, binding, etc.; and, (in the case of the higher class), the various

features of a book, such as the title-page, the table of contents, the index, the introduction, etc.; the use of reference books, such as dictionaries, cyclopædias, etc.; the use of the card-catalogue, etc. At the same time, these children are shown about the library, supplied with cards at the Registration Desk, and, in short, "introduced" to the library in such a way as to make an intelligent use in future, on their part, more than probable. Later in the school year comes the time when the class is about to graduate, some of the members entering one of the High Schools, and some going at once into active life. It is probably true that at such a time as this, the tendency with some of these pupils would be to graduate *from* the use of the Children's Department, without at the same time graduating *into* the use of the main library. At this time, therefore, the librarian himself makes a personal visit to each of these sixteen grammar schools, and, in the course of a ten-minute talk to the graduating class, gives them suggestions in regard to the resources of the main library, and the bearing which these resources have on their future studies and work. Here again the probability is strong, that a large percentage of them will act on the suggestions. This view of the case, moreover, is corroborated by the experience and observation of the last seven years. In other words, the library may feel that, whatever may be the degree of intelligence with which the adults of to-day are using its resources, it is training up a race of future readers who will use the library to the best advantage.

In addition to the above, it should be said that each teacher is entitled to a special card on which ten or more books may be issued, strictly for use in connection with school work. Regular deliveries of books also, in large quantities, are made to the various school buildings, the expense of transportation being borne by the School Committee, and the dates in these, as in the other instances, being assigned by the Superintendent of Public Schools.

The Educational Department of the Public Library is fortunately situated on the same floor of the building as the Children's Library. This is known as the Barnard Club Library Room; and it contains, in all, about 8,100 vol-

umes, including not only the 897 volumes of the Barnard Club, but all of the library's books on educational subjects. A separate card-catalogue is at hand, on one of the tables, which are placed here and there in the room. The purpose of the room, in fact, is to supply a place for serious study and work, in connection with educational literature. The Barnard Club, which, by the way, is composed of teachers, has raised a fund of \$1,035.00, in order to enable the library to meet the demands of teachers more adequately in its purchases in this field. In accordance with the action of the School Committee, a collection of textbooks, including those which are in use in the public schools of the city at any given time, is constantly kept for reference in the Public Library. This collection, numbering about 360 volumes, is constantly accessible. The Class Room, which is conveniently fitted up as a "reference room" in connection with the Children's Library, has an admirable collection of reference books constantly to be consulted, on the table. While the systematic plan above outlined has been primarily designed to apply to the public schools, and has in fact been actively developed by the public school authorities, the benefits of it are by no means confined within so narrow a circle. The "special school card," in particular, is issued to schools and colleges of every description. In one year, an application was made by two of the parochial schools, of the Roman Catholic Church, for the opportunity of bringing their pupils to the library for the lectures given by the Children's Librarian, which was of course granted with much pleasure.

During the past two years the intimate relations of the library with the Rhode Island State Normal School have been greatly strengthened. The upper classes are brought to the library for a study of its methods in detail; and definite measures of coöperation are constantly planned for.

About two years ago the Children's Librarian established in the Class Room an admirable collection of children's books, (after the analogy of the "Standard Library" for adult readers, described on another page), and known as "A child's own library." An attractive catalogue of these books, (all of which were selected with careful reference to the

question of the best editions, the best illustrations, etc.), has been printed and widely circulated.

One of the most delightful features of the Children's Department is its continual round of attractive exhibits of some kind, on the central bulletin-board, or the one nearest the door. On the walls are photographs of some of the choicest works of art, loaned by Miss Sarah J. Eddy. Near the entrance is a beautiful oil painting by James M. Lewin, presented in 1904, by a large number of friends of the library. The windows always contain plants and flowers, even in Winter, when indeed, their beauty is all the more appreciated. In short, the whole place presents a most cheerful and inviting aspect to the troops of happy children who visit it.

In 1900, there were 4,718 volumes belonging to this department, and in 1909 there were 8,267 volumes; and yet it has been impossible to increase the shelving capacity. In 1900, 24,858 volumes were issued from this department, and in 1909, 51,591 volumes. Nowhere in the building is the need more urgent, for greatly enlarged accommodations, than in the Children's Department.

Philanthropic activities.

In connection with the Children's Department a considerable number of philanthropic activities have gradually grown up, including work with clubs and settlements, "travelling libraries," "home libraries," the circulation of the collection of books for the blind, etc.

The library has between 200 and 300 volumes printed in raised letters, for the blind; and their circulation shows a marked increase, from year to year. Two periodicals also, printed in raised letters, are regularly received.

The space assigned to the shelving of these important volumes, for blind readers, has become wholly inadequate to the purpose.

The Standard Library.

The only remaining room on this floor is known as the Standard Library. This represents, in brief, an attempt to bring together the works of the best writers, in all the different literatures of the world,—in each instance, as nearly as possible, in the best edition. As there are not so very many "best writers," in all, this

is a collection not too large to be easily manageable, representing a little more than 100 authors, and a little less than 1,000 volumes. When an author has written in a language other than English, the usual rule has been, to place first the text of the work, in the original; and, next to it, the best English translation. As is indicated in the printed list of these editions, published in 1902, there were some editions which were included under protest, at the beginning, since the ideally desirable edition might be out of print, or perhaps not even yet in existence. Little by little, however, it has been possible to secure some of these, and the collection is thus steadily assuming the ideal form. The inscription on the wall in this room tells the story of its underlying aim very briefly: "The books invite you, not to study but to taste and read." In other words, while the building contains an unusual number of "study-rooms," this is not one of them, but is a place for the enjoyment of the books, pure and simple. The aim is to give the room as much as possible the atmosphere of a private library, as distinguished from a room in a public institution; and it is the emphatic testimony of many of the readers who have used it in the last six years, that this aim has been abundantly realized. One other underlying purpose has been to a large extent fulfilled,—namely, a stimulating of the desire of readers to own these books for themselves. In one instance an order was given by a reader, for several hundred dollars' worth of books, from the list of these editions. Since the opening of this building, this feature has been adopted in two college libraries, namely, those of Bowdoin College and Dartmouth College.

The principles underlying the selection of these volumes are outlined in an article in the "Monthly Bulletin" of this library, Oct., 1898, v. 4, p. 272-82.

The Lecture Room.

The Lecture Room serves several purposes. On the one hand as indicated by the name, it is intended for lectures and addresses. On the other hand, it is used for the foreign books, and its walls are also constantly available for exhibits of various kinds. As already stated above, the more than thirty lectures by the Children's Librarian, to the school children,

are given here. From time to time also, the room is used by clubs or classes for lectures on various subjects, in connection with which the library can show a collection of books or other material. There have been, from the beginning, (in March, 1900), about 150 very noteworthy exhibits on the walls of the Lecture Room. It is the usual practice to keep each exhibit there for about three weeks; and the total number in any given year has consequently seldom exceeded fourteen or fifteen. The greater part of these, in any given year, have been those lent by the Library Art Club, consisting of very carefully selected photographs. But in the intervals between any two of these collections, the space has been filled in with illustrations of some kind, taken from the library's own resources, in its Art Department.

This library has never aimed to fulfil, in any sense, the functions of an art museum,—nor is this necessary, in a city where that field is so well provided for, by the Rhode Island School of Design. One most interesting work of art, however, has come into its possession, an oil painting, which is now hanging upon the walls of the Lecture Room. This is an original by Jan Baptist Huysmans, the eminent Flemish painter, of the Sixteenth century. It is a large and well handled landscape, (about 9 x 7 feet,) and is in admirable preservation. The picture was presented to the library in 1900, by Mrs. Charles Bradley, as a memorial of her husband, the late Charles Bradley. It had, still earlier, been in the possession of the late Judge Charles S. Bradley, and is known to have been sold in Paris about the year 1850.

The method of showing the photographs has proved extremely satisfactory. Those two walls of the room which are not the outside walls of the building, are covered with burlap, to a height of about 6½ feet, thus forming a most satisfactory background for the pictures. At intervals of six inches, horizontal brass rods are fastened to these walls. An ingenious metal contrivance called the "bull-dog clip" pinches the top of the picture, while the curved top of the clip hangs over the brass rod. The chief convenience of this plan lies in the fact that close adjustments can be made in either direction.

The room has several times been used for exhibits of the Providence Camera Club.

The Foreign Department.

While the library has from the first aimed to supply the needs of Non-English readers, this was at first attended with some difficulty. It was not until 1907 that it was possible to create a separate department, bringing all the books together in the same part of the building, and placing them under the care of a separate attendant. At that time the books were placed on the walls of the Lecture Room, and the Special Reading Room near by, and the attendant was stationed in the Standard Library. The different languages represented by collections of greater or less proportions, include the following: French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, German, Swedish, Dano-Norwegian, Russian, Yiddish, Polish, and Armenian, (with a few books under each of these: Modern Greek, Turkish, and Arabic).

The total number of volumes thus available, on open shelves, is about 12,000, the French books being considerably in the lead. This does not include all books in foreign languages which the library owns, but, in general, those which are used from a literary rather than a technical point of view. If the foreign books which still remain classed under such divisions as the Art or Industrial collections should be added, the total number of volumes would be very largely increased. Much has been done in the way of making known the resources of the library in these various literatures, to readers included in the nationalities represented, by specially printed lists and otherwise. One of these collections,—that of the Italian books,—had as its nucleus the valuable private library of the late Albert Jenkins Jones, of Florence, Italy, which was received as a gift in 1887, together with a fund for its increase.

It scarcely needs to be added, that this department is greatly handicapped by the fact that the Lecture Room is used for two other important purposes, (lectures and picture exhibits), besides being the place of deposit, and room for serious study, in connection with the foreign books.

Some of the noteworthy features of the work in this department are embodied in a paper by Miss Marguerite McL. Reid, the custodian of the department, which was printed in the April, 1909, number of the "Library Bulletin," issued by the Department of Educa-

tion, (of Rhode Island), with the co-operation of the Rhode Island Library Association.

THE THIRD FLOOR.

In passing from the Second Floor to the Third Floor, we enter a still more specialized field of library work.

The Art Department.

The Art Library, with other collections, is housed in one large room, (about 58 x 43 feet,) at the left, at the head of the stairs, two smaller rooms occupying the rest of the space.

The library possesses two "art funds," of \$1,000.00 each, one of which was given by the late Albert Jenkins Jones, (the donor of the "Jones Italian Library,") and the other by Miss Clara A. Hoppin and Miss Elizabeth A. Hoppin. These funds yield an income of about \$80.00 per year, and it will be easily understood that the library has been obliged to purchase far more extensively in each year, (in the field of art publications), in order to respond to the demands of readers. The number of volumes in the Art Collection is now about 5,000, and many of these books possess great rarity and value. Since the collection is used very largely by the students of the Rhode Island School of Design and by designers in the local jewelry shops, the room is well supplied with tables, etc., at which this material may be studied to the best advantage. In this same room,—the Art Library,—a large photograph case has been constructed, after the most approved methods. There is in this room a collection of about 500 photographs of Florence, Italy, which was received in 1902 as a gift from one of the library's nearest neighbors, the Fielden-Chace School for girls, which until recently occupied the building on one of the opposite corners of Washington and Greene Streets. These photographs, (all of which are by Alinari,) were selected for the library, in Florence, in 1902, by Miss Mary Morison, of Boston, and have been made to cover, very comprehensively, the contents of the various buildings in Florence. An earlier very much appreciated gift of photographs had been received from the pupils of Miss Wheeler's School.

Another notable collection in this room is the "Music Library," now numbering about 2,150 scores. The nucleus of this collection

dates from 1895, when about 220 scores were purchased by the library. It was soon, however, very largely increased by a gift received from Mrs. Robert Bonner, comprising the entire musical collection of the late Robert Bonner, (about 500 scores). It has since then been steadily increased, not only by purchases, but by noteworthy gifts from Mr. Walter I. French, the friends of Miss Charlotte Broome, and others. The purchases have been made very largely in connection with the concerts given in Providence during the Winter, by the Boston Symphony Orchestra and other organizations, in order to complete the library's collection of the music represented on their programmes. A separate card catalogue of the music has been prepared and is constantly in use.

Within a short time the coöperative measures which have been developed between this library and the Rhode Island School of Design have been notably extended. The plan includes the sending of notifications of the purchase of individual books, the placing of exhibits where they can be visited by readers, the preparing of special lists of references, etc.

The Special Collections.

One of the most valuable of the special collections in this room is the Caleb Fiske Harris "Collection of works on Slavery and the Rebellion," received in 1884. This was begun by Mr. Harris as long ago as 1850; and after his death, in 1881, it was offered for sale. Although this was, strictly speaking, a purchase by the library, it almost deserves to be numbered with the gifts, since, out of the \$2,000.00 which was paid for it, the sum of \$1,909.00 was a gift to the library, (from the Rhode Island Hospital Library Association; at Portsmouth Grove Hospital), for the express purpose of securing this collection. It comprises over 9,500 separate titles, (books, pamphlets, reports, etc.), and is one of the richest collections of this kind in the United States.

The "Harris Collection" has been supplemented by several very noteworthy collections, on the same general subject. One of these was the Rhode Island Soldiers and Sailors Historical Society Collection, presented to the library by that Society in 1900 and numbering 609 volumes.

There have also been valuable additions to the antislavery material, (newspapers, etc.), made by Mrs. Henry G. Russell, Arnold B. Chace, the heirs of Sullivan Dorr, the heirs of Alphonso R. Janes, the sons of William Lloyd Garrison, and others. Two of the "deposited collections" are worthy of special note. One is the scrap-book collection on the American Civil War, which was made by the late John Russell Bartlett, who was the Rhode Island Secretary of State during that war. This comprises 60 folio volumes, extending from 1860 to 1868. Another scrap-book collection, on the same period, was made by the late George H. Smith, and comprises 37 folio volumes, extending from 1860 to 1864. Here then are about 100 volumes, (in the two collections), which have been deposited in the building for safe keeping, by the heirs of both Mr. Bartlett and Mr. Smith; and they have already been of the greatest use to historical students.

In 1909 also, the library received, as a bequest from the late Mrs. Henry G. Russell, the set of 5 volumes of scrap-books, (also of folio size), which had been made by the late Mrs. Moses Brown Ives, relating to the American Civil War. These have been deposited with the other scrap-book collections just mentioned. Mrs. Russell also bequeathed to the library her other books on the American Civil War.

In 1891 the Library received from Mr. Daniel Berkeley Updike, of Boston, an unusually valuable collection, known as the "Updike Collection of Pamphlets," which has been placed on the shelves of this room. Soon after this he sent another collection of pamphlets. All have been bound uniformly, and make a collection of about 150 volumes. They represent the accumulations of five successive generations of the Updike family, of Cocumscussuc, near Wickword, and show the kind of reading which occupied the minds and thoughts of a Rhode Island family in the centuries covered by this period. Mr. Updike sent at about the same time several valuable collections of autographs.

From the late Alfred M. Williams, who died in 1896, was received his valuable private library, which comprised more than 3,000 volumes, and was especially rich in folklore and

in works on the Irish, Scottish and other Celtic literatures. A special card-catalogue of these books may be consulted in close proximity to the shelves containing the books.

One of the most interesting and valuable of all the special collections was received as lately as 1908,—namely, the “Nickerson Architectural Collection.” As the name indicates, it has been placed in the library as a memorial of the late Edward I. Nickerson, an architect of this city, who was a trustee of this library for thirty years, (1878 to 1908), and was Secretary of the Board for twenty-four years, (from 1884 to 1908). This collection of books, which comprises 790 volumes, and is valued at about \$5,000.00, is placed in the library as a gift from Mr. Nickerson’s daughter, Miss Lyra Brown Nickerson. Miss Nickerson has not only carried out her father’s obvious intention by the gift of these volumes, but has followed it with a gift of \$10,000.00, the income of which is to be used for its maintenance.

The Industrial Department.

The custodian on this floor is also in charge of the Industrial Department, the entrance to which is just at the right, at the head of the stairs. This contains more than 9,000 volumes, and is especially rich in long sets, such as the proceedings of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, the American Society of Electrical Engineers, etc. It also contains a very valuable collection of industrial “trade catalogues,” made with much care and discrimination, and have proved of the greatest service to students and artisans. In purchasing industrial books, assistance of exceptional value has been constantly received from Mr. H. W. Craver, the Librarian of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. The Patent Collection comprises about 900 volumes, (including not only annual reports but the specifications and drawings). The very meagre supply of foreign patents needs also to be very much extended and developed. In the building up of this patent collection, valuable assistance was received in 1901 from several of the local manufacturing establishments, including the Brown and Sharpe Manufacturing Co., the Nicholson File Co., Gen. William Ames, the New England Butt Co., the Rumford Chemical Works, and Mr. W. L.

Coop. Moreover, in 1906, the library was enabled to carry this work virtually to completion, (so far as the “Specifications and drawings” are concerned), through the public-spirited thoughtfulness of the Manufacturing Jewelers’ Board of Trade, which made a gift to the library of \$125.00, for the express purpose of securing these volumes. With the exception, therefore, of certain early volumes, which are out of print, the library’s set of these “Specifications and drawings” is now complete.

The industrial “trade catalogues” now number about 700 volumes. This library was one of the earliest to collect these useful publications, on a large scale, and its collection was cited as a notable instance of serviceable work, in the *Engineering News*, in 1907, (Dec. 12).

That portion of the Industrial Department nearest to the entrance has been fitted up with a table, etc., and the reader here finds the books of reference bearing on these subjects, and also the “new books,” as they are added, as well as the special card-catalogue of this department. One side of this room is given up to the bulletins of the various agricultural experiment stations, which are arranged alphabetically, by states: and, close by, the reader finds the printed card-catalogue of the contents of these bulletins, printed at Washington, by the Agricultural Department.

It will be noticed that the art and the industrial departments are in very close connection with each other, and the access from one to the other is very direct. This is fitting, since Providence is preëminently a city which stands for “art applied to industry.”

In 1906, there was printed a very useful catalogue entitled “Books for workmen in the three leading industries of Providence.” These three industries, which are, respectively, “Textiles,” “Jewelry and silversmithing,” and “Foundry and machine shop work”), are at the basis of the commercial and manufacturing prosperity of Providence; and this catalogue was a revelation, to many readers, of the extent to which this library has been strengthening its resources in these fields of industry. This admirable guide to the books on these subjects, carefully classified and annotated, was prepared by Mr. Joseph L. Wheeler, who was at that time connected with

this department, and who employed some very effective measures in the distribution of this catalogue, personally visiting the various shops and factories, in order to bring the catalogues directly to the attention of the workmen.

This library was among the first in this country to bring together, as a separate department, its books and other material on technical subjects, with separate catalogues, and a separate equipment for conducting researches, the whole being placed under the care of a special attendant. All necessary appliances, such as tracing paper, weights used in tracing, etc., may be had from the custodian, and facilities are offered, for photographing a piece of work, when desired.

The whole of the Third Story has become overcrowded, so that it is a serious question what can be done to accommodate the additions made to the various collections. As elsewhere throughout the building, more space is urgently needed.

The noteworthy features of this department and its work were presented in a paper by Miss Ethel Garvin, the custodian in charge of it, on "The use of industrial collections at the Providence Public Library," prepared in 1906.

"DEPOSITED COLLECTIONS."

As already indicated, an interesting feature of this library building is the extent to which it contains "Deposited collections," which, although they are not at present the property of the library, are of great service to the readers. There are 12 of these, in all; the largest being the collection of the Rhode Island Medical Library, (about 22,000 volumes). This occupies a room about 65 feet in length, on the Third Floor, and is open through a great part of the time when the remainder of this story is open. It has its own attendant, and is largely used. This is a collection of great value, being one of the largest of the medical libraries of New England, and is particularly rich in long sets of bound medical journals. Of these journals about 200 are regularly received. The arrangement whereby this society places its collection in the building is of decided mutual advantage. On the part of the library, it renders it unnecessary to spend the all too meagre library funds for books in this field, and adds in a very welcome manner, to the library's resources for reference.

Some of the other "deposited collections," in addition to the notable scrap-book collections already mentioned, and also the Barnard Club volumes, include that of the Rhode Island Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, (87 volumes); that of the Rhode Island Philatelic Society, (11 volumes, with many pamphlets); that of the Gaspee Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, (45 volumes); (all of the above being stored in the same room with the Art Library); and that of the Rhode Island Horticultural Society, (150 volumes), the latter being stored in the Industrial Library. All of these are available, for reference, to the readers who use the Providence Public Library.

THE STACK.

The Stack Building is at present a noteworthy feature of the library; and even with the gradual tendency to extend the open-shelf system more and more, will doubtless always continue to be important. Of the six stack stories, all but the lowest one, (where cornice has been laid over a concrete base), have glass floors; and the entire interior construction, in fact, comprises only glass, steel, and marble. It is not easy to see, therefore, how a fire, even if one should originate here, could find very much on which to feed. The marble is used here for no decorative purpose, (although it undoubtedly contributes to the general light effect of this part of the building), but in order to supply a plain and smooth surface, easily kept free from dust, by wiping with a damp cloth. The same principle is kept in view in the steel construction. Here all panels are eliminated, and as few corners, angles, and crevices of any kind are left, as can possibly be planned for. It is a part of the daily routine of cleaning, to go over everything which is in plain sight and within reach, every morning of the year, with a damp cloth. There is left, therefore, only the small amount of dust which continually settles on the shelf in the rear of the books, and on the top edges of the books, such as would be taken care of by some one of the "vacuum cleaner" methods which have become well known within the last ten years. The skill of the architect, however, provided an ingenious method, which has served the purpose admirably during these past ten years, in the shape of a "dust-closet,"

with its own electric blower, communicating with each one of the six Stack stories. The fact that the windows of the Stack are not intended to be opened, but are cleaned from the outside, and that the air which is admitted is drawn in by an electric fan, and is filtered through cheese-cloth, helps materially in maintaining the almost ideally clean conditions of the Stack.

The lighting of the Stack is most satisfactory. No part of any stack floor is at so great a distance from the outside wall that, in the daytime, light cannot easily reach it from the windows. The artificial lighting scheme is ingeniously planned to cover very admirably every book, either on horizontal or on perpendicular lines. In other words, not only are the separate lights so distributed in each floor, by wires running overhead, that the space is evenly divided, but on any given floor a switch will turn on both sets of lights—those above and those below. For the upper shelves, the lights overhead are favorably placed. For the lower shelves, the light shines up from below, through the glass floor. While the number of electric lights in the Stack is a large one, great economy in their use has been planned for, by a switch near the entrance, which turns on the lights up and down the aisle. When one has arrived at the point in question, the separate light needed there can be turned on, and then immediately turned off, after using.

In each of the corners diagonally opposite each other, an iron staircase runs from top to bottom, in the Stack Building, and as already stated, electric lifts connect each stack story with the Delivery Desk, for the transmission of books, with the exception of the two at the bottom.

As was indicated at the beginning of this account, the architectural plan, kept in mind from the very beginning, has been that of a main building, with several "stack sections" projecting from it. It is probable, however, that in the future as in the past, the so-called "stack-sections" will be occupied in part by rooms for readers, enabling them to read, or to study, or to use the catalogues, or to apply for books, in close proximity to the great mass of the books.

Even in the passages of the stack floors themselves, (both lengthwise and crosswise),

provision is everywhere made for a table and chair, so that a reader may, if necessary, establish himself, for extended study, at any point in the Stack. A stack permit is needed, for this arrangement.

The present number of volumes in the building is about 164,000, of which about 66,000 are in the Stack Building.

INTER-COMMUNICATION.

Throughout the building there is a recognition of the need of close communication between one department and another. An interior telephone system, with 16 different stations, makes it possible for an attendant at one desk to speak with every other desk, while lifts are provided in order to facilitate the sending of books from one floor to another.

This need of coöperation and coördination, within the buildings, is, in fact, one of the fundamentally important features of the library work, as between the different departments of the same library, as much as between the different libraries of the same community. This last problem is one which has been very seriously studied by the different libraries of Providence.

HEATING, VENTILATION, ETC.

The question of fireproof construction has been most carefully planned for throughout the library as well as the question of exits from the building; and yet, as a still further protection, there is no fire built under any part of the library building proper. In other words, a Boiler House, in which all the necessary work of this kind is most conveniently planned for, (and which is at all times kept in an almost spotless condition), has been erected on the library grounds, about 40 feet away, (at the nearest point), and the pipes which are carried under ground supply the heat to the library building. The system of ventilation is an elaborate and comprehensive one, and the very ample basements and sub-cellars which are made possible by the rapid fall of the grade on this part of the hill, make it possible to provide easily for all such mechanism, as well as for dressing rooms, storage rooms, etc.

The number of cubic feet in the Boiler House is about 48,500, making, together with the 700,891 cubic feet of the main building, a total cubical capacity of about 750,000 cubic

feet. The building is well lighted, and the number of electric lights a little less than 1,000.

To sum it up in a word, the library building was planned for practical use; and, during these last ten years, has proved itself to be admirably adapted for such use.

THE BEGINNING OF BRANCH DEVELOPMENT.

In no part of its work have the library's financial limitations proved so much of a hindrance as in this important field. Not until December, 1906, was the first branch library opened to the public. This one, the Sprague House Branch, at Mount Pleasant, was made possible through the generous coöperation of the Sprague House Association. By the arrangement which this Association made with the Providence Public Library, some of the most important items of expense were eliminated, including rent, cost of janitor service, heating, lighting, and most of the interior fittings. Besides this, the Sprague House Association placed its own collection of more than 500 volumes at the disposal of the library. This library now has on its shelves a total of 2,989 volumes; and its circulation during the year 1909 was 16,048.

The second instance, not yet fully developed into a "branch library," is that of the North End Delivery, on Orms St., the work here having been begun in 1907. In this instance also, the library has been constantly indebted to the interested coöperation of the local organization, (the "North End Working Girls' Club"), in precisely the ways above referred to. This Delivery has at present 1,213 volumes on its shelves; and its circulation in 1909 was 8,361.

THE FOUNDING AND GROWTH OF THE LIBRARY.

The Providence Public Library is now in the 33d year of its actual operation, having been opened to the public in 1878. The roots of the movement leading to this event, however, are to be looked for much earlier than 1878, including the granting of its charter in 1871, and the acceptance of the charter in 1874. The latter date is borne on the library seal, as the year from which its history starts. The delay in proceeding to organize the library was caused by the difficulty felt in deciding what type of institution should be kept in mind. A "polytechnic" institution, of the type of the

Cooper Institute, in New York, was strongly desired by some of its early supporters, in which, for instance, the Providence Association of Mechanics and Manufacturers, the Rhode Island Society for the Encouragement of Domestic Industry, the Rhode Island Horticultural Society, the Providence Franklin Society, and the Franklin Lyceum should be provided for. It was the other conception of the library which was finally accepted, namely, that typified by the Boston Public Library; but it is a significant fact that, of these five organizations, the libraries of three of them are now in the building of the Public Library, and that two of them hold their meetings in it. A charter was granted by the General Assembly in 1871, and was accepted Nov. 13, 1874; and since this is the actual official beginning of the library the date "1874" is the one which is borne on the library seal. Later, in 1875, this charter was amended; and on the 19th of May, 1877, the present librarian, Mr. William E. Foster, was elected, entering on his duties, June 1, 1877.

The library was first opened to the public on Feb. 4, 1878.

The library has been fortunate, from the beginning, in the hold which it has had on the interest and regard of the community. Up to the year 1889, no part of its funds had been received from the city government. But from private sources, it has from the first received a steady stream of gifts and bequests. Scarcely a year has passed without at least one, and in some years there have been a considerable number.

The City of Providence, beginning with 1889, has made an appropriation each year, in aid of the library. This appropriation has been gradually increased, from year to year, and was \$26,000.00, in 1909.

Some of the largest of the gifts, other than books, have comprised the bequest of Moses B. Lockwood, who died in 1872, of more than \$32,000.00; that of Henry L. Kendall, who died in 1883, of \$275,000.00; that of John Wilson Smith, who died in 1891, of \$101,000.00; that of Alfred M. Williams, who died in 1896, the library being the residuary legatee in this instance; and that of Charles C. Hoskins, who died in 1903, of upwards of \$90,000.00. With these must be mentioned the noble gift of John

Nicholas Brown, made during his lifetime, in 1897, which is mentioned below, under the head of the library building.

Moreover, a large share of the books themselves have been received as gifts. One of the societies already mentioned above, the Providence Association of Mechanics and Manufacturers, turned over its collection of books at the start, numbering 6,022 volumes. Later, in 1899, 600 volumes, forming the larger part of one of the free libraries of the city, on being discontinued as a separate library, (the "Woonasquatucket Library"), were transferred to this library as a gift from the Richmond Manufacturing Company.

Besides the notable "special collections" already referred to above, (including the Harris Collection, the Soldiers and Sailors Historical Society Collection, the Updike Collection, the Williams Collection, the Nickerson Collection, etc., there have been a considerable number of instances, on a smaller scale, of gifts of books, or of money definitely designated for books.

The entire amount received from private generosity, up to the end of 1909, (not including gifts of books, etc.), amounted to about \$1,000,000.00. It is certain that a sum as large as this, if received at one time, would have yielded a larger income than has ever yet been at the disposal of the library. It seems equally certain that these gifts would never have been received, through these successive years, if the library had not expended what it received, in service to the public. It was the spectacle of a library, in actual operation, which appealed to the generosity of these donors.

THE EARLIER QUARTERS OF THE LIBRARY.

The library has occupied three buildings in succession. At its opening, Feb. 4, 1878, it was housed in a room at the Exchange Place end of the Butler Exchange, up one flight. At this time, the number of volumes on its shelves was 10,307. Here it remained for a little more than two years, when it was obliged to leave its crowded quarters. On the 5th of July, 1880, the library was reopened in its new quarters on Snow Street, with a little over 18,000 volumes on its shelves. It here occupied the entire ground floor of the three-story building

of the English and Classical School, extending through to Moulton Street, in the rear. In these quarters it remained for about twenty years, (until March, 1900), the space gradually becoming more and more uncomfortably crowded, until, at the time of its removal, the books were stored in three different buildings besides this main building. At the time of removal, the number of volumes was about 90,000.

CONSTRUCTION OF THE PRESENT BUILDING.

At a meeting of the Board of Trustees, May 13, 1892, it was voted that a committee be appointed by the chair, on "the selection of a site." The President appointed the following: Alfred M. Williams, Nicholas Sheldon, and Newton D. Arnold. This committee organized by electing Mr. Williams chairman, and it continued to serve, not only as a committee on the selection of a site, but also as a committee on plans, until the same committee was elected a "Building Committee," at a meeting of the Board, March 13, 1896. Mr. Williams, who had left the country on account of his health, died at the island of St. Kitt's, in the West Indies, on the 9th of March, 1896, shortly before his appointment as a member of the Building Committee. The vacancy in the committee caused by Mr. Williams's death was filled by the election of Cornelius S. Sweetland, at the next annual meeting of the Board of Trustees, Feb. 12, 1897, and Mr. Sheldon was chosen chairman of the committee. On the 16th of May, 1893, the Librarian, Mr. William E. Foster, was elected secretary of the committee, serving until the adoption of the final plans, after which, Mr. Alfred Stone, the Architect, served as Secretary.

Mr. Alpheus C. Morse, of Providence, was appointed by the committee as Consulting Architect in 1893, and served in that capacity until his death, November 25, 1893, after which Professor William R. Ware, of Columbia University, New York, was appointed in his place, and assisted the committee in the selection of the architects.

In November, 1894, Stone, Carpenter, and Willson, of Providence, were chosen architects of the building, as a result of a competition confined to the architects of this city, and served until the completion and occupation of

the building in 1900, the plans having been several times modified in the meantime.

In 1896 the contract for the building was awarded to the John W. Bishop Co., of Providence, the first ground being broken on the 3d of August, 1896. During the greater part of the period of construction, Mr. Henry N. Bodwell served very efficiently as Clerk-of-the-Works.

THE GIFTS OF JOHN NICHOLAS BROWN FOR THE BUILDING.

Fortunately, in the drawing of the plans, provision was made for the maximum of the library's needs, rather than the minimum. During the Winter of 1896-97, as the necessary funds were not forthcoming, it was very reluctantly decided to curtail the expense, as well as the scale on which the building had been planned; and the work was accordingly begun on this reduced scale. At this juncture came the first of the three noble gifts of the late John Nicholas Brown, whose name will always be held in grateful remembrance for his generous, timely, and effective aid to the library. Mr. Brown's gift "completely retrieved the situation," (to quote from Judge Durfee), and made it possible to return to the original plans. Mr. Brown's first gift of \$200,000.00, in his letter of Feb. 4, 1897, was followed by two others, making a total of \$268,595.75.

TOTAL COST.

Other gifts of smaller amount were also made, for the completion of the building, but the greater part of the remainder of the cost was taken from the available funds of the library. It is worthy of note that the City of Providence has not, at any time, appropriated anything towards the cost of the library building. The total cost, (land, building, and fittings), is about \$475,000.00, of which \$88,000.00 is the cost of the five different lots which comprise the site.

From the foregoing, it will be seen that the first ten years of the occupation of the present building have witnessed a healthy development in every detail of the library's work. Not only has there been a notable expansion in the stock of books, and in the use of the books,

and in the number of readers, but also in the various activities which demand more space. Fortunately, as has been stated above, the land owned by the library admits of the necessary extension, in the ideally best way, as soon as the needed funds can be secured.

FORMAL OPENING OF THE BUILDING.

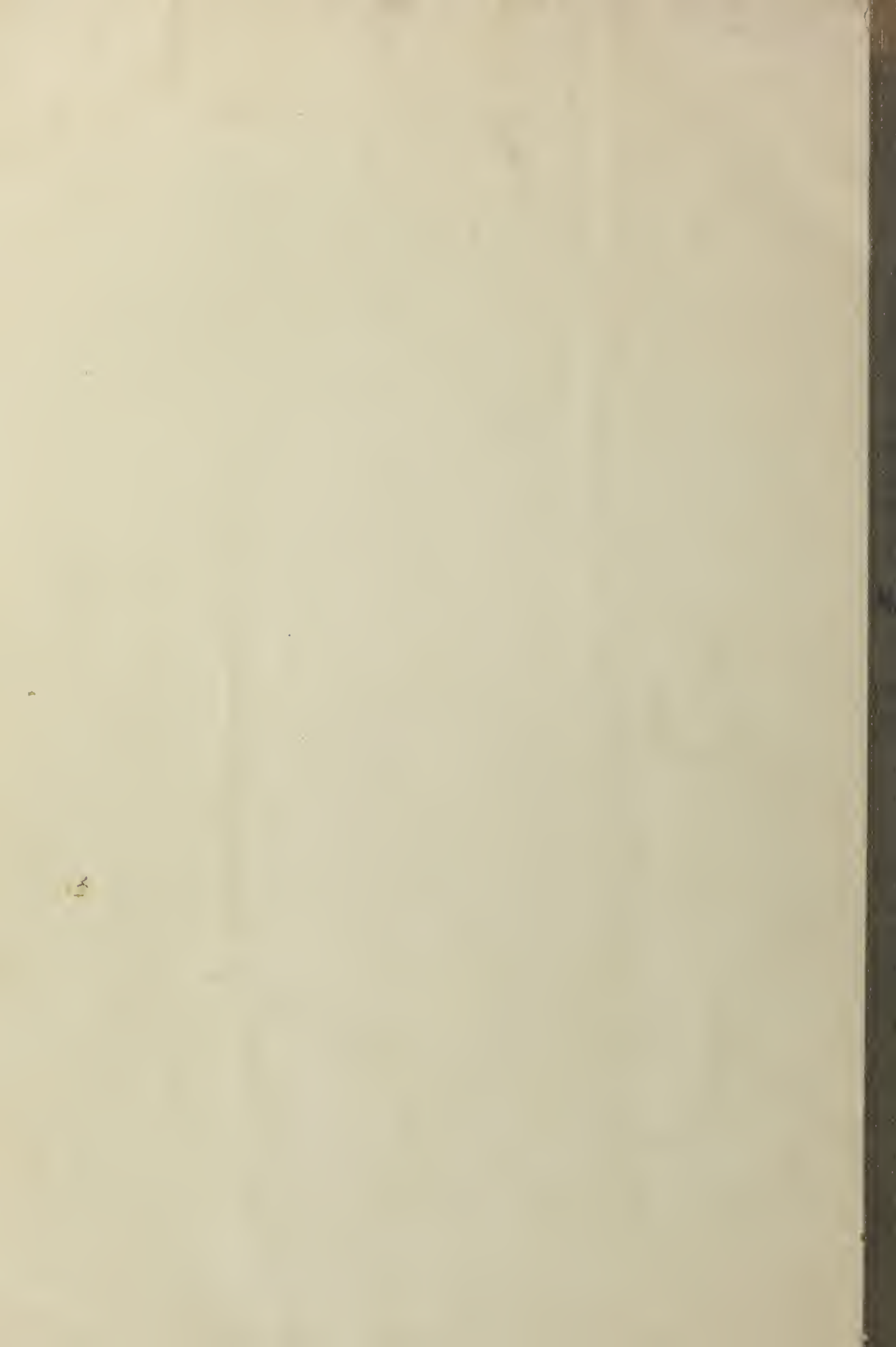
The library building was formally opened to the public, March 15, 1900. On this occasion an address of unusual force and brilliancy was delivered by the late Arnold Green, together with briefer addresses by the President, (the late Judge Durfee), and the Librarian. The ceremonies were begun and ended by an invocation and a benediction, of great beauty and significance, respectively by the late Bishop Clark, of the Protestant Episcopal Church, and Bishop Harkins, of the Roman Catholic Church. Notices and descriptions of the building, of greater or less extent, have appeared in print from time to time, and have been chronicled in the successive annual reports of this library.

Following is a statement in regard to the various street-car lines by which the building is reached.

The following lines run in both directions passing the Providence Public Library: Oaklawn and Manton Avenue. The Atwell Avenue Line passes the Library on west bound trips only. The Atwell Avenue Line comes from East Providence via Taunton Avenue and South Main Street; the other lines passing the Library west bound, start from Market Square. Transfers from all lines connect with one or more of these three lines.

Visitors from the East Side, leaving the car at the corner of Westminster and Greene Streets, can most conveniently reach the Library, (going west), or at Cathedral Square on the same car going east.

Returning, the Broadway cars, passing the corner of Washington and Aborn Streets, run to the East Side, and cars to the other parts of the City from Exchange Place and other points.



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